NATIONAL CONFERENCE NUMBER.

The Seed Sower.

A Magazine for the Church, the School, and the Home.

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The Lily of the Valley.

There is not any weed but hath its shower,
There is not any pool but hath its star;
And black and muddy though the waters are,
We may not miss the glory of a flower,
And winter moons will give them magic power
To spin in cylinders of diamond spar;
And everything hath beauty near and far,
And keepeth close and waiteth on its hour.
And I, when I encounter on my road
A human soul that looketh black and grim,
Shall I more ceremonious be than God?
Shall I refuse to watch one hour with him
Who once beside our deepest woe did bud
A patient watching flower about the brim?

G. M.

Sonnet to March.

This is the lusty month when I was born—
Dear March, the maddest month of all the year!
To your wild tunes the blush mounts in the thorn,
Spring has your heart, though you sport Winter's gear.
I am like you, I cannot walk demurely
Whilst yon prophetic blackbird airs his soul,
And on black boughs the raindrops insecurely,
Drunkenly, dance, and in bright squadrons roll.
You and the blackbird were the first to guess
What the old world is still too shy to say:
Once more she means to don her girlish dress
In spite of wrinkles—only wait till May!
The vain old world! Come, let us scour these skies,
Here's moody April, with her shifting eyes.

C. R. M.

The Fervours of Devotion.

A SERMON, BY THE REV. H. GOW, B.A.

"Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

Dr. Watson, of Liverpool, has published a sympathetic and interesting essay on Dr. Martineau's Life in the 2nd number of the *Hibbert Journal*. In the course of that article he refers to several remarks of Dr. Martineau's upon the Unitarians of his time which are worth our consideration even now. Dr. Martineau describes the Unitarians of his early days as "a people scrupulous of the veracities, but afraid of the fervours of devotion." More than once he complained of the characteristic coldness of his own communion, and lifts up a warning against it, which, says Dr. Watson, "unless I am much mistaken, has been repeated by Mr. Stopford Brooke." Preaching in Manchester, he told the congregation, "You do not want less cultivation, but more soul," and he protests against the "nimble-minded" logician. That criticism is still often repeated. We are told that we have more mind than heart, more intelligence than feeling, more love of truth than love of God. Let us think, first, of the praise which is accorded us. Praise often makes a serious man who knows himself more humble and ashamed than the severest criticism. It is a great thing to be really cultivated, and a still greater thing to be scrupulous of the veracities. A man of culture is a

man who knows something of the large thoughts and the great deeds of other times and nations. He is a man who does not live to make money or to get pleasure. He will not despise money or pleasures. He feels he is here to do some hard, honest work, to earn his living, and to gain ever more power of working and more knowledge of the laws of nature and the meaning of human life. He will rejoice in simple pleasures, in kindly human relationships, in the beauty of music and of art; he will not have a soul above games and laughter. These things are right and natural elements in life; they help, and do not hinder work when they slip in between a duty coming and a duty gone. The cultivated man or woman is not frivolous, living for pleasure, nor yet a pedant, living for books. Merely to read books is not necessarily to be cultivated. It is to have so developed the faculties God has given us through contact with great thoughts, through contact with life, and through hard, honourable fighting for things which are worth having, that we have gained not only knowledge but power. A man of culture is sometimes thought of as a weak, amiable creature who knows a great deal about books, but very little about life, and is quite incapable of earning his living. That is not true culture. The really cultivated man is a man of the world in a high and noble sense. He walks in this world as one who knows something about it, and who has gained through that knowledge the power to do something in it. He is conscious of belonging to a great army of workers and thinkers. The great thoughts of the dead are not mere ornaments to be brought out now and then like the best china to impress his friends. They are helps to his thinking; they strengthen and stir his mind, they are thoughts by which he lives. So, too, the great deeds of the dead are not mere matters of history. They show him what is in man, they reveal him to himself, they are incentives to a large and noble and unselfish life. To say of any body of men and women that they are cultivated is to say no slight thing. It means not merely knowledge, but power. Cultivated people are not merely learned, they are effective. Through contact with large thoughts and great deeds and beautiful ideals, they have gained a personality which is effective through its catholic sympathies, its tact, its disciplined energy, and its clear, sound, common-sense. They have learnt perspective, they have learnt to know what really matters and to work stedfastly for that, undisturbed by the small, teasing, unimportant worries of every day. The cultivated man is the opposite of the small-minded, self-absorbed egotist, who thinks that he and his friends and his church and his work and his pleasures are the first of their kind, and the only things worth thinking about. The cultivated man "sees life steadily and sees it whole," and whatever be his work he gains power to do it more quietly and faithfully through that feeling of wide relationships, and by his sense of proportion and the real value of things.

And then, secondly, consider what it means to be "scrupulous of the veracities." To be true in all the relationships of life, lovers of truth, seekers after truth, quiet, trustworthy, fearless witnesses of what we believe to be the truth, that is no slight or easy thing. To be a true friend is to be staunch, dependable, loyal, and kind. The truth lover is the man who reverences reality. He hates shams and hypocrisies and unrealities. That reverence for reality is essentially a reverence for God. It is in the noblest truth-seekers an absorbing passion, which can alone be roused by a reality that is glorious and good. He may say to himself, "I do not know that the truth I shall find will be beautiful, I do not know that it will be pleasant, but, in some sense, I am certain that the truth is better than illusion." As a fact, I believe the truth, when seen thoroughly, turns out to be always more beautiful as well as more helpful, and better than fiction. The truths of science are more wonderful and more beautiful than the fictions of cosmologists. The artist who paints what he truly sees paints more beauful pictures than the artist who tries to improve nature. The dramatist who is true to life writes a more impressive, more touching, more lovely play, even though it be some pitiless, terrible story of Othello, than he who writes a pleasant, comfortable fairy tale. More and more as we read the stories of the great stern lovers of truth, whether they are scientific men or artists or philosophers, do we find that truth is not merely better than falsehood, but that it is far more beautiful, far more divine. The man who reverences reality is in the presence of God, whether he knows it or not, and sooner or later he will find out that "beauty is truth, truth beauty." Whether in

large or little things, it means much to be scrupulous of the veracities. That man or woman who is true will be anxious not only to see reality, but to make others feel it too. In his human relationships he will be true. The true man need not say all that he means, but he must mean all that he says. It is not our duty to say out all we think to everyone; there is a time for silence as well as a time for speech. We often, indeed, sin through silence as well as through speech, and must remember God takes account of our slothful silence as well as of our idle words; but still it is assuredly not out duty as truth-loving men and women to confess to everyone what we think the truth. Jesus himself said, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." To be true is not to say all we mean, but it is to mean all we say. This it is, then, to be true; it is to be strong, steady, reliable men and women, reverencing reality in nature, in history, and in the soul; it is to be simple and brave, seeing things for ourselves, not carried away by popular prejudice, not afraid to say no. Such men and women will believe in hard work in holding their own, and will drink delight of battle with their peers; they will be sincere and just and humble in all the relationships of business, of pleasure, and of home. They will have a high moral ideal of truth and rectitude. Most assuredly we shall not say that all this characterises us as a church; the utmost we can say is that we wish it did, and that we desire earnestly to possess more real culture and more strong veracity. Nevertheless, Dr. Martineau's criticism is no doubt true that we care more about culture and veracity than we care about fervour and devotion. A passionate joy and love are not so clearly the mark of our churches as a wide sympathy, a liberal spirit, and a strong feeling of the need and value of truth. I do not urge the necessity of what might be described as Celtic emotionalism. That is not possible for all earnest strong men and women. It is to some extent a matter of race and temperament. When we see this passion deeply felt and finely expressed it is full of attractiveness and power. We may admire and enjoy it, but we cannot all take part in it. We must vary in our excitability, our powers of being roused to quick and lively feeling. Nevertheless, we all of us need more love, more joy, in our religion. It is not enough to be strong and true and effective, not enough to see things as they are, and to work faithfully and earnestly at our appointed task, not enough to be just and trustworthy and honourable. A man of whom this can be said has the root of the matter in him. He is one like the young man whom Jesus loved, who had kept all the commandments, and who is not far from the Kingdom of God. But he may still lack a certain abandoment of soul, he may lack humility, he may be a little hard and cold. This world with its infinite wonder ought to appeal to our imaginations. This great concourse of men and women, with their tragedies and comedies, with their deep needs, their sorrows and miseries, their humour, their variety, ought to enthral us with interest and evoke our pity and affection. The issues of life are so important, the dangers are so great, the heights which it is possible to gain are so splendid, we have no right to be merely cool and calm. It is a spectacle to move us to the depths of our hearts; it is a battle in which we are called to take our part, and we can only fight our best if we are on fire with the greatness of the conflict. When men and women gather together to thank God for life, to pray for strength, to prepare themselves for renewed and more loyal service, they might not inaptly be compared to an army praying on the eve of a great battle. There need be no playing on the emotions, no sentimentality, but there will be something of suppressed excitement, there will be a feeling of loyal, affectionate comradeship, there will be a quiet, strong emotion bidding us give ourselves without fear and hesitation whole-heartedly for the good of the cause to which we have pledged ourselves. It is true that nothing exciting, nothing unusual, may happen to-morrow. It will probably be just the old round of duties which we know so well. That fact constitutes an especial reason for continual watchfulness. By far the largest amount of the good or ill we do is done in the ordinary round of every-day work. By far the most important part of the influence we exert to help or hinder others, to warm or chill their spirits, is the influence which goes forth from us as we do our common tasks. In the special occasions and exceptional moments of life we may take steps of immense importance to ourselves, but the chief part of our work in the world depends on the regular daily drudgery and the spirit in which it is done. That common daily life is our battlefield, and we need to feel passionately the

vital importance of our actions there. A soldier in such a warfare will not fight effectively without love and joy. It is not enough to see things clearly, to be strong and brave and trustworthy. The best soldiers will be men who are deeply stirred by indignation against the evil with which they contend, who are passionately devoted to the cause which they serve, and who rejoice with joy unspeakable that to them is given the privilege of taking a part, however humble, in such a holy cause. They may show little or no emotion, but in the best soldiers it is there. They are not merely intellectually and morally strong; the passions of joy and love stir and cleanse their souls and knit them together in loyal and happy comradeship. In this great warfare under God we are all engaged. It is given to us all to fight against evil, to make the crooked straight, and the rough places plain, and to prepare the way for the Kingdom of God. No one can exaggerate the importance of the duties God has laid on us, the seriousness of the conflict, the height and greatness of the work to which we have been called. A man who feels this will be roused to a deep and sacred enthusiasm; his mind will be clear, his will strong, and his heart will be full of love and joy.

Animals and Their Rights.

A right is a liberty of doing or possessing something consistently with law, and therefore, properly speaking, animals, like men, have no rights other than those which are allowed and secured to them by law. It is useless to speak of "natural rights." Natural rights, left to themselves, very quickly come to a dead-lock; uphold this, and you contradict that; uphold that, and you contradict this. If, for instance, there is the natural right to live, there is over against it the natural right to take life in order to live, and the one is not more natural than the other.

But if animals have few rights, they have many claims, and to the moral man a moral claim appeals as forcibly as one that is also legal. If nothing is said in Christ's teaching about man's duty to animals, it is because nothing is said about any duty, simply as duty, whilst a great deal is said about the moral laws and principles, out of which duties spring. There is a moral law which is called the law of mercy. It is a law of higher being—the lowest natures being the least merciful—and a law of higher power—power which is powerful enough to modify itself. Power which is unable to modify itself is either blind physical force, or the action of a fiend. Mercy, then, may be regarded as an essential principle of the highest nature, and of the highest power—the nature and power of Divine Being. Of this supreme mercy we are at once the objects and the agents, and the only example of merciful power in this world is that which takes effect upon, and through, man.

But human pity, doing the work of Divine Mercy, has always been slow to extend its arms. The slave and the captive, the alien and the heretic, even the insane and the afflicted, have at some time been excluded. Sex and tenderest age have been no protection. It would have been strange indeed if the inferior creation had not also been shut out.

Insensibility to the pain of animals has been excused on the ground that animals have no souls. It is difficult to understand the moral constitution of a man who can use such argument. It ought surely to be enough for him that he at least has a soul; that every act of wilful cruelty done to any creature that has capacity for pain—if it have nothing else—is done at the peril of that soul; that, as he loses feeling, so in that proportion he loses his own soul. It is this consideration that makes the strongest point in the case against vivisection. To torture the brute is to brutalise the man. To invent pains which are not in nature, which in the course of nature animals would never know, to intensify them by artificial stimulation, and to repeat and prolong them at will, is to be more brutal than any brute has ever been. These are means which no end can justify. In the administration of justice we stop short of torture—we will let the truth go rather than discover it in that way. Martyrdom would have no meaning, and no history, if the preservation of life were in itself sufficient excuse for everything done to preserve it. Death before dishonour is a principle of conduct which is always in reserve to sweep away sophistical persuasion to do evil that good may come. Is it less dishonouring to humanity to burn out the brain of a monkey than to burn out the brain of a babe? They are probably sentient in much the same degree, and, if all that evolutionists say is to be

accepted, the dividing distance between them is not so great as it was once thought to be. Are we not disposed, perhaps, to place an exaggerated value upon human life in its present stage? It is wrong, undoubtedly, for a man to take his own life, but it might be more tolerable for him at the bar of the Divine Justice if he had terminated intolerable pain by his own hand than if he had saved himself from it by the agonies of unoffending victims. It might even be that an occasional lethal chamber for incurables, dying by their own consent, would be a more pardonable remedy in the eyes of Divine Justice than a perpetual chamber of horrors for certain classes of animals. The vivisector's theory of life would seem to be that men and animals are thrown into the world like rats into a cage, and that it does not matter what the top creatures stand upon so they are able to breathe and look round.

But the chief ground of objection to the infliction of unnecessary pain upon animals little able to bear it, and wholly undeserving of it, is spiritual rather than moral. The natural order of things is of necessity hard and stern. That animal life may be balanced and maintained and continued, order must prey upon order. Nature, it is true, has its own alleviations and anodynes, but the sole check to the ruthlessness of nature, the sole counteracting influence to the grip of natural law upon living things, the sole protecting and redeeming power able to bring non-natural tenderness into the natural struggle for life, is the Divinely-implanted instinct of pity given to man. It is never more manifestly Divine than when he lets it act to his own disadvantage in respect of material interest and gain. It is also a sign for which he looks around in vain, an evidence not in nature of Divine superintendence and control. To outrage this instinct is to undermine his own faith, and to add one more argument to the contention of despair.

It is a bitter controversy this that is now waged, and wild words are spoken on both sides. And bitter and wild it will be until the opponents on the one hand learn to appreciate scientific zeal, and to allow for the bias which goes with zeal, and the experts on the other hand learn to understand that behind the front rank of opponents lies a vast multitude of those who, slow to move, and not quick to speak when it comes to setting science against conscience, will certainly say with no uncertain voice, "Thus far, and no further." Animals must die for us, as we must sometimes die one for another, but we will spare them that vicarious suffering which we dare not require, one from another, amongst ourselves.

E. P. Barrow.

Forgiveness.

"So far as I have gone in life," says Robert Louis Stevenson, "I have never been able to discover what forgiveness means." Certainly it is a word very difficult to define. We say "forgive and forget" as if the two expressions were synonymous; but if forgiveness is a religious duty, then it cannot imply forgetting, for to forget is outside the power of the will altogether. It must be possible to forgive and yet remember. Some people regard forgiveness as being simply abstinence from revenge; but while this is a necessary part, it is not the whole of forgiveness. Christianity demands that we should forgive "from our hearts," and while it supplies no specific of forgetfulness, it stops short at no merely negative compliance with the moral law. There have always been those in the Christian Church who have interpreted our Lord's commands against the outward resentment of injuries literally, and have taught and practised non-resistance; but even if they are right, they have only fulfilled a portion of the injunction; theirs is only an extreme interpretation of the negative theory. The truth is, it is impossible to formulate the law of forgiveness. The highest ideals of the spiritual life cannot be defined and codified, but forgiveness, like all the other mysteries of ethics, "is briefly comprehended in this saying,—'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'" If we want to study our right attitude towards those who trespass against us, we must study our own attitude towards ourselves. Now, what most of us feel towards ourselves is not enthusiastic affection, not even uniform approbation, but unfailing charity. He must be an abnormally bad man who has never momentarily condemned himself for his own sins, and an abnormally conceited one who has not often cursed himself for his own folly. What we rightly feel with regard to ourselves we may legitimately feel towards our enemies,

for no man ever yet hated himself. We all seek eagerly to excuse ourselves to ourselves. We take into full consideration every alleviating circumstance. We forget neither heredity nor environment. We refrain from looking at our own characters in the light of a single bad quality which we know we possess. We do not generalise as to our future conduct, even in our humblest moods, on the ground of one sin we committed in the past. We may know we have been cowards, but till the breath is out of us we shall recognise in ourselves potential heroism. A man may abuse himself when he is repentant, and ridicule himself while he feels ashamed, but he will never hold himself up to anyone else's hatred and contempt, and his anger will not be of long duration, for though he may never be able to forget, he cannot nurse a grudge against himself. Now, as we believe, it is this grudge which Christianity forbids us to feel against our neighbours, not righteous indignation, for that is, at least by example, enjoined in the New Testament. "If thy brother sin against thee," said Christ, "rebuke him," and "show him his fault between him and thee." These words leave a good large latitude for reasonable anger, and suggest no servile acceptance of wrong. Nor do we believe that, allowing for Eastern hyperbole and the impossibility of translating idioms from one language into another, the command to turn the other cheek is incompatible with our view of forgiveness. No one registers a final verdict against himself. However bitterly, however often, his conscience may upbraid him, with regard to himself he still hopes all things and believes all things, and, never despairing, he gives himself another chance.

But to turn to the lighter side of the question. Apart from real injuries, how difficult it is to forgive an unkind speech or a rudeness. Very often, of course, the wound we deplore is purely imaginary, and our supposed adversary meant us no harm at all. A tendency to oversensitiveness, to mental hypochondria, as it were, is not wholly within the power of the will to cure, but a just-minded man will allow for his own failing, and not set his self-induced pains permanently against his neighbour. But some unkindnesses, slights, and rudenesses are not precisely unintentional, and yet if we could but look at them dispassionately they are very forgiveable. Some one, for instance, is very much put out; for a long time he has been hard pressed by circumstances, his nerves are out of gear. Suddenly some small misfortune plays the part of the last straw. He loses his self-control, and gives way to the reprehensible but very natural desire to bring someone else down to his own level of mental discomfort. Accordingly, he snubs the first person he dare snub. Doubtless he is not wholly excusable. He is not really carried out of himself, and had he met anyone of whom he stood in awe, for whatever reason, be it love of their good opinion, or desire for their good graces, he would not have done it. All the same, he did not mean much harm. When it is done he feels, most probably, a wicked relief followed by more or less misgiving, quite inadequate, no doubt, to the half-unconscious unkindness he has done. Did he hurt So-and-so? he wonders. After all, he has done him no harm, he reflects, only perhaps wounded his pride a little. *Only* his pride! Is there any portion of a man's mental anatomy capable of giving more pain? Why do we all talk of "only pride?" The pains of wounded pride are never, it is true, mortal, for while pride feels it flourishes, but surely this tenacity of life increases capacity for suffering, and the worst of these pains is that when they get beyond a certain point they set up hate, the most dangerous of all moral disorders, very likely to spread and very slow to heal. What a pity so many of us "strike at others in our pain!" What a pity, also, that they will not be at the trouble of realising that we were in pain when we did it, and therefore not quite responsible! All resentment makes against happiness; it is better to forgive, if we can, at all costs. By "all costs" we mean to wipe out injuries for something less than the highest reason, if we cannot attain to the highest. Sir Thomas Browne, in his "Christian Morals," instructs us very well in this by-path of virtue. "If thou must needs have revenge of thine enemy," he writes, "forgive him and enjoy it." This conscious enjoyment of magnanimity is, we admit, more Aurelian than Christian in spirit, but at least it is a better and a more comfortable condition than that of resentment. "If thou hast not mercy for others," goes on the moralist, "yet be not cruel to thyself. To ruminate upon evils, to make critical notes upon injuries, is to add to our own tortures, to lash ourselves with the scorpions of our foes and to resolve to sleep no more; for injuries long dreamt on take away at last all rest."

"Write thy wrongs in ashes," he exhorts. Is this possible? Not altogether, perhaps; but though we may know the record of our injuries remains in our hearts, we need never purposely re-read it. As to telling our wrongs to a friend while we are yet smarting under them, and before we have been able to think about putting them away, we believe the expedient to be as a rule beneficial. If the injury is serious the righteous indignation of our friend will soothe our pain; if it is small, it may become still less in the telling; and as we suppress the desire to add to our story, it may seem to us first pointless, then ridiculous, and at the end we may lose our grievance in laughter. But, whatever means we take to obviate resentment, we cannot always attain to the ideal set before the world in the Paternoster. Most of us know that at the bottom of our hearts remains something which, however we explain the word, we could not sincerely say that we forgave. With this root of bitterness, what is to be done? We can suggest nothing but to avoid revenge, and there leave it. "What a man cannot amend in himself or in others," says the philosophic author of the "Imitation," "he must bear with patience till God ordains it otherwise." Something may happen some day to alter our minds. The fact that we have not yet forgiven in no way proves that we shall never forgive. Time heals the wounds of resentment more surely than those of sorrow. The experience of life may enlarge our charity, fresh information may throw light on a wrong which was partly a misunderstanding, or a sudden temptation may come to ourselves, in the light of which it will be easy to forgive the actions of our enemy.

WILL CHRIST COME?—*The Delayed Millennium, by* GEO. ST. CLAIR: *published by Harrison and Sons, 59, Pall Mall, London.* — A book full of curious information regarding one of the most wide-spread and persistent delusions of the human race. For not only in Christendom, but in many heathen lands, the expectation has arisen from time to time that some prophet or national hero would ere long return to bring happiness and the golden day. Mr. St. Clair's book deals chiefly with the expectation in its Jewish and Christian forms. At the same time he gives an account of certain non-Christian Messiahs. While a sad story, it is not altogether sad, witnessing, as it does, to the ineradicable hope of the heart for a brighter future and a fairer social day than the world has yet known. There are also various doctrines of the Last Things. A readable and instructive book.

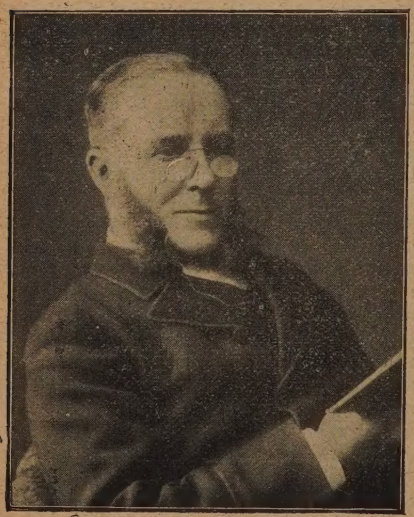
The National Conference.

PROFESSOR CARPENTER (President).

The eighth triennial meeting of the National Conference will be held at Liverpool on Monday, April 20th, and the four following days. "Thither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord." The Conference came to birth at Liverpool in April, 1882, and it is according to the fitness of things it should celebrate its majority in the same place. The numbers, the enthusiasm, the vitality which marked that occasion, the unbounded hospitality of our Liverpool friends, came upon many as a grateful surprise, and began a new chapter in the history of our churches. Not intended at the first as a denominational movement, but as offering a platform for the communion of Liberals from all non-subscribing churches, the invitations to attend appeared by advertisement in the *Christian World*, *The Nonconformist and Independent*, and *The Freeman*, as well as our own journals. In that respect the Conference was a failure. Out of 500 delegates present, not more than half-a-dozen came from churches other than our own, and at the second gathering in 1885, held at Birmingham, these

had dropped out. Were we not so shy of speaking of the Divine Intention, we might say that this happened in the order of Providence, that the Conference might do for our churches what would have been impossible if the Liberal-thinking Christians from all the non-subscribing churches had accepted the invitation. The result would have been a delightful re-union every three years of men from many quarters drawn together for a day or two by certain common sympathies, and then, with no further connection, separating and dispersed; but it would not have been the Conference as we knew it to-day, the organ and voice of a distinct group of churches united by their history, their sufferings, their traditions, their development, and their ideals. The Conference covers a less area than it was hoped, but it has more cohesion, a more intense vitality, and a more direct and definite mission.

It is interesting to turn to the records of the first meeting 21 years ago. D. Ainsworth, Esq., M.P., was the chairman, and the four secretaries were Dr. Crosskey, Mr. H. Rawson, Mr. Steinthal, and Mr. A. W. Worthington. Of the committee of eight only two remain, Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Page Hopps. The sermon was preached by the Rev. C. Beard, B.A., and the Rev. W. Gaskell, M.A., conducted a never-to-be-forgotten communion service. On the following days papers were read on "The Development of the Religious Life within our Churches," by Herbert New; on the question, "By what Practical Means can our Churches best extend and enlarge their Religious Influence? by the Rev. R. A. Armstrong, B.A., and Mr. Richard Bartram; on "The Education and Supply of Ministers for our Pulpits," by Professor J. E. Carpenter, M.A.; and on "Ministers' Stipends and Augmentation Funds," by the Rev. H. Ireson, M.A., and Mr. Harry Rawson. A service was also held at the Philharmonic Hall, when addresses were given by Dr. Crosskey, Professor Drummond, and an American visitor.



Rev. R. A. Armstrong, B.A.

The immediate practical result of the Conference was the raising of the "Sustentation Fund" (£20,000) for the augmentation of ministers' stipends. A profound impression had been made on all present by Mr. Harry Rawson's paper, revealing a condition of poverty among many of our ministers amounting almost to a scandal and a disgrace. The fund was quickly started, and has proved an untold blessing in many a minister's home. Yet it may be questioned whether things are really much better to-day than then, for while the Sustentation Fund is so much to the good, the contributions of churches appear to have sensibly diminished. It is felt by many that the matter of ministers' stipends must again be considered, and, if possible, put on some better footing. We understand that in his paper on "Church Needs," etc., Mr. Wood will have some suggestions to make.

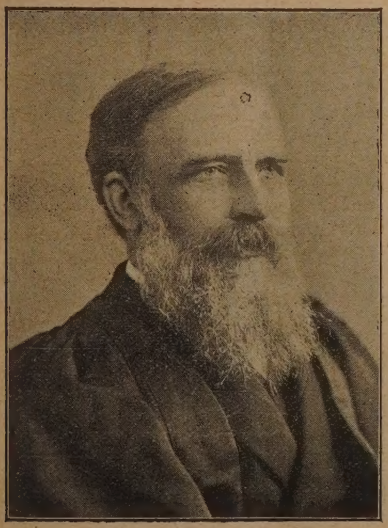
Subsequent meetings of the Conference have been held as follows: (We give the place, and the names of the presidents, and preachers of the Conference sermon)—

Year.	Place.	President.	Preacher.
1885	Birmingham		Mr. Armstrong
1888	Leeds		Dr. Crosskey
1891	London		Mr. Stopford Brooke
1894	Manchester		Dr. Drummond
1897	Sheffield	Mr. James Beard*	Mr. Stopford Brooke
1900	Leicester	Dr. Blake Odgers	Mr. C. Hargrove

* Presidents of the Conference were not appointed until 1897.

In addition two special meetings have been held, one at Nottingham, to consider Dr. Martineau's scheme for the organisation of our churches; and one in London, when the constitution of the Conference was altered so that it might speak and act through its executive in the name of the churches as a whole.

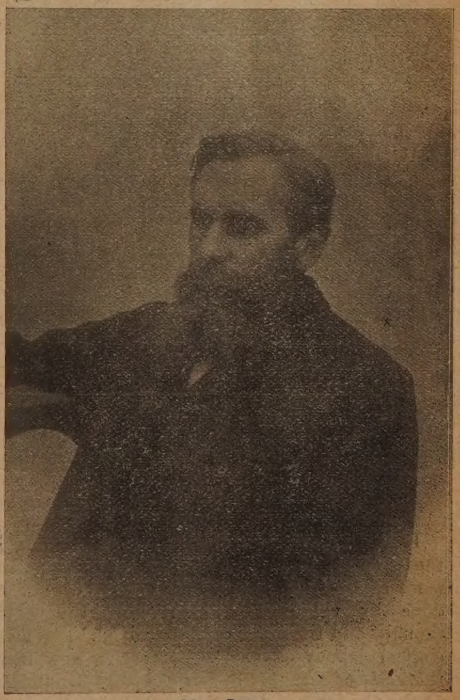
At the last Conference held at Leicester in 1900, two important movements were started: (1) a Ministerial Pension Fund, and (2) The National Conference Guilds Union. Owing to the immense and untiring energy of the President (Professor Carpenter), the sum of £21,000 was raised in the course of twelve months, and the fund is now in working order. The Guilds Union was formed to bring the various Guilds which have sprung up in our churches into friendly association for mutual help and stimulus. Thirty-three Guilds are now affiliated to the Union, in connection with which a Prize Essay Scheme for the encouragement of study and reading has been formulated.



Rev. J. Wood
(President of the Guilds Union).

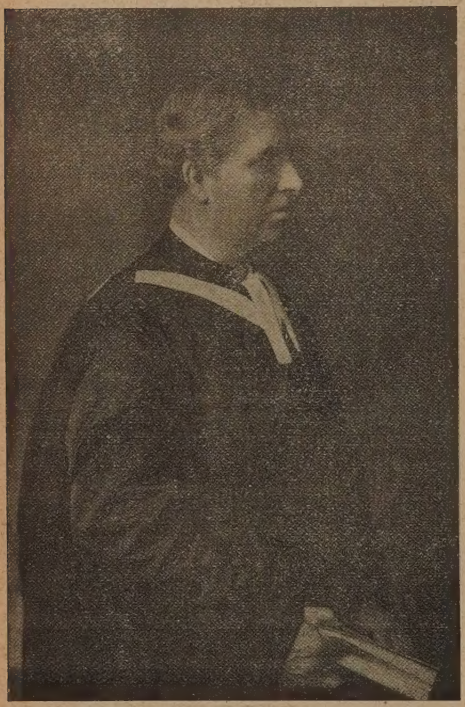
A further subject was referred by the Conference to a committee, *i.e.*, "The Supply of Students for the Ministry," but owing to the fact that the Conference has no paid secretary who can give all his time to the work, this important matter for the present has fallen through.

The approaching Conference in Liverpool bids fair to be the most momentous of the whole series. We have to face the question whether the Conference is to be a mere debating society, a mere gathering of individuals for friendly intercourse, or whether it is to take up the work waiting in so many directions to be done. In many minds the question arises—Must we not, in the interests of self-preservation to begin with, but still more in order to meet the changed conditions of the new time, seek to come into closer relationship with each other? Can we not, without renouncing the autonomy of each church, find some method of making ourselves more effective *as a whole*? Is it not possible so to



Mr. Jupp.

organise ourselves that the help we give each other shall be more generous, more adequate, and *more certain?* Can we not make our fellowship a more real and practical thing? Can we not weld our scattered congregations into a Church? While Congregationalism is a fine thing, is there not sometimes among us the grotesquerie of Congregationalism? While Independency is much, are not union and co-operation more?



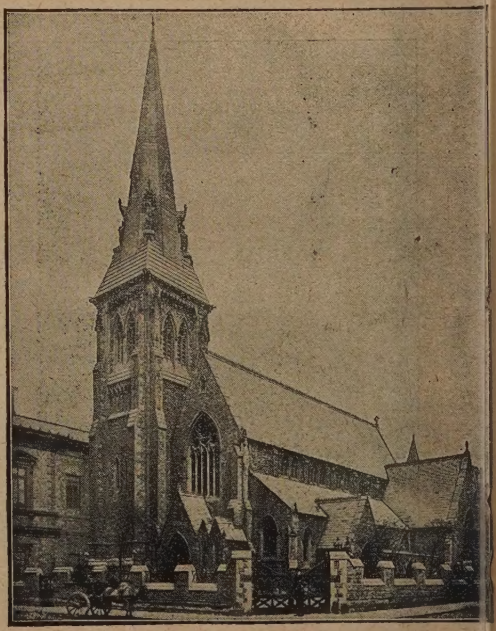
DR. HUNTER.

It is these questions which give meaning to the proposal of the committee for the appointment of a paid secretary. The work cannot be done by volunteers. It requires the whole thought and time of a capable official. The mere clerical labour of the conference is now more than can be managed by our honorary secretaries. If the Conference desires to enter upon the large field open to its efforts, and demanding its attention, it must give the committee a fitting tool.

These questions will be raised both in Mr. Wood's paper on Thursday morning, and at the business meeting on Thursday afternoon.

But in other respects the Conference bids fair to be memorable. The papers promised by Dr. Hunter, Mr. Jupp, and Mr. Drummond touch on subjects of the greatest interest. Our friends in Liverpool are making the most generous provision for the entertainment of their guests, and we may confidently expect a record attendance.

The *Seed Sower* has pleasure is giving a portrait of the President, together with portraits of some of the speakers, and pictures of two or three of the Liverpool Churches.



HOPE STREET CHURCH.

Our Liverpool Churches.

The meeting of the National Conference at Liverpool will add special interest to the illustrations of some of our Liverpool churches which, through the kindness of friends, we are enabled to give. The City of Liverpool—Liverpool proper—has three most interesting churches of our faith, and four flourishing missions. The "Ancient Chapel," dating from 1618, is of peculiar interest, while both Ullet Road and Hope Street have a noble ancestry.

Ullet Road, Sefton Park.

This beautiful building is in striking contrast to the well-known, plain-featured Renshaw Street Chapel, from which the congregation migrated in 1899. It accommodates 440 worshippers, and the design is based on the earlier decorated period. Within and without it is of the finest artistic quality. The whole of the sittings are contained within a wide nave. A chancel and organ chamber with vestries complete the interior. Above the vestibule there rises a gable crowned by a belfry, containing a rose window filled with stained glass, and above this in the broad hollow of the arch is an angel holding a scroll. In the gable is a copy of Thorwaldsen's "Christ." The adjoining buildings (the gift of Sir John Brunner and Mr. Henry Tate) contain a Congregational Hall, with accommodation for Sunday Schools, and are connected with the church by a cloister. These buildings with the church, fill three sides of a quadrangle, leaving the fourth open towards the Ullet Road boundary. The church has a number of splendid windows to the memory of former ministers and members of the congregation. The carved panel in the reredos is a reproduction in oak of Leonardi da Vincis' famous fresco of the "Last Supper." The following is the wording of a memorial tablet in beaten copper placed on the North Porch:—"To the glory of God, whose service is perfect freedom, this church is dedicated by the congregation, which having first been established A.D. 1688, in Castle-hey, Liverpool, by the Rev. Christopher Richardson, one of the clergymen ejected by the Act of Uniformity in 1662, removed to Bennis Gardens, South Castle Street, in the year 1727, during the pastorate of the Rev. Henry Winder, D.D., and again in the year 1811, to Renshaw Street, where during 88 years it met for divine worship. In the same place the same congregation has raised this sacred edifice ever mindful that 'The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipper shall worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth.' A.D. MDCCCXCIX."

The congregation has had a succession of notable ministers, under whose care a great religious work has been done, and whose abilities, services, and public spirit have added lustre to the annals of Liverpool. In the 19th century the list includes George Harris, William Hincks, John Hamilton Thom, Charles Beard, L. P. Jacks, and the present minister, Dr. Klein.

The second annual meeting of the Conference Guilds Union will be held here on Monday evening, April 20th.

Hope Street Church.

This church, built during the ministry of Dr. Martineau, and made for ever memorable by his 25th year of service, dates from 1849, the congregation then migrating from Paradise Street. It was one of the earliest specimens of Gothic architecture adapted to Nonconformist worship the country had seen. It contains about 700 sittings. The style adopted is the early decorated, and considering that it was built just at the opening of the Gothic revival, when that style of architecture was only beginning to be understood, it reflects immense credit on all concerned. The interior is made notable by a series of windows, designed by Miss Martineau, and by others, erected to the memory of former ministers and members. Like Ullet Road, Hope Street has a long roll of famous ministers, and while Dr. Martineau stands out conspicuous from all the rest, the names of John Yates, John Grundy, W. H. Channing, Charles Wicksteed, Alexander Gordon, and last but not least, R. A. Armstrong, will long live not only in the records of the church to which they ministered, but in the history of our churches at large, which they did so much to strengthen and inspire.

Ancient Chapel, Toxteth.

The Ancient Chapel is one of the most quaint and picturesque buildings in Liverpool; its graveyard is one of the oldest, probably, connected with Dissent in the country. Its history is a significant commentary on the mutability of theology. Originally it was a parochial Protestant Chapel, but built on ground granted by a Roman Catholic. Belonging to the Established Episcopal Church, its earliest ministers were ordained by the Bishop of the Diocese. Its minister in the Uniformity Act year was not ejected with the famous two thousand; but it lapsed through Puritan proclivities into a Dissenting Meeting House, and was included in one of the Lancashire Presbyteries. It next changed from the Presbyterian to the Congregational form of Governmente and it is now Unitarian in thought. Its first ministe, was the renowned Richard Mather, father of Increasr Mather and grandfather of Cotton Mather. The originae chapel was built for him probably in 1618; the presentl building was opened in 1774, and restored in 1861.

Guild Union Prize Essays.

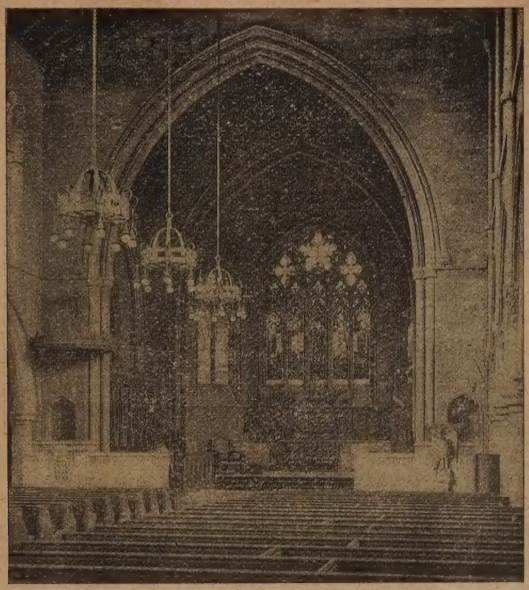
These essays should be sent in to the Rev. J. Ellis, the Parsonage, Marsford Street, Bethnal Green, London, E., by Tuesday, March 31st. Each essay must give the writer's name and address, and name of Guild on the front page, and must be initialled by the Warden or Secretary of the Guild to which the writer belongs.

Ullet Road, Sefton Park.

Notes and Jottings.

The Report of the Royal Commission on Irish University Education has been issued. It is a curious and singularly ineffective document. The Commissioners first report in favour of some concessions to the Roman Catholic claim, and then proceed, one by one, to give reasons why it is undesirable to give effect to their own recommendations. Nothing could well be more abortive, and we fear that this thorny question is likely to remain open for a considerable time longer. Meanwhile Ireland suffers terribly from educational inefficiency, and its only ancient University, deliberately excluded from the scope of the recent inquiry, makes no appeal either to the intellectual life or the religious instincts of the mass of the people.

The recent division in the House of Commons in which the second reading of what is popularly known as the Liverpool Bill was carried by a substantial majority, is distinctly significant. The bill, which was introduced by Mr. Austin Taylor, is aimed avowedly at the growth of ritualism. The House had the alternative of a milder measure before it in Mr. Cripp's bill, and Mr. Taylor's more pronounced Protestant Bill was opposed in an able if rather temporising speech by Mr. Balfour. It is doubtful, however, whether the cumbrous machinery of Parliament will allow anything more to be heard of it during the present session, and for many reasons the Government will wish to avoid an ecclesiastical controversy if they can contrive to do so; but it is clear that there is a growing uneasiness among the laity, which may at any time take the shape of a formidable revolt. With the revived interest in disestablishment among Nonconformists, aroused by the Education Bill, it seems likely that Church questions will occupy a good dea of public attention. It begins to look not altogether improbable that the Church itself may have to accept disestablishment at a distant date as the only escape from an intolerable position.

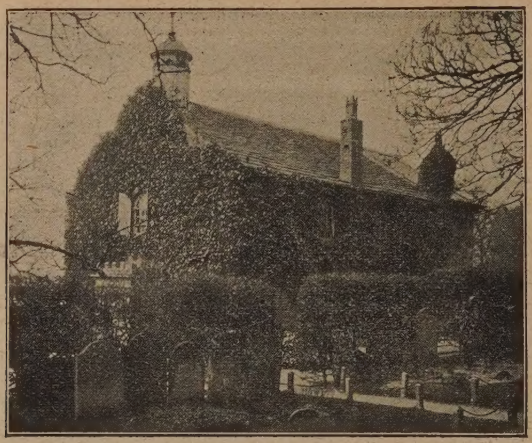


ULLET ROAD, SEFTON PARK (INTERIOR).

The two events of chief interest among the Free Churches during the past month have been the meeting of the Free Church Council at Brighton, and the appointment of the Rev. R. J. Campbell to the vacant pulpit of the City Temple. On the whole it is the latter which has aroused most attention. The popular preacher is one of the idols of the hour, and the position which Mr. Campbell will occupy is one of unusual publicity and real influence. We hope that he will be strong enough to resist the ill-considered flatteries which have been heaped upon him by the press. There are two dangers to which the ablest ministers are exposed at the present time—overwork and the booming of the religious press. Of these the latter is much the more damaging. It leads so easily to loss of simplicity, and spiritual deterioration.

An interesting proposal has been made in New England for some closer approximation between the Orthodox and the Unitarian Branch of the Congregationalists. They spring from the same Puritan stock, and the division arose over doctrinal controversies which have ceased for the most part to arouse any living interest. Inheritors of the same traditions of worship, and sharing in many directions the same liberal ideas, they have so much in common that the old lines of separation have become unreal. The same is true of many of our inherited religious divisions at home. There are men of the free spirit in nearly all the churches. Sooner or later they must acknowledge their brotherhood and work hand-in-hand.

Meanwhile we shall watch these informal *pour parles* in New England with interest, though it seems unlikely that anything more definite than some growth of mutual sympathy will take place at present. The orthodox party among the Congregationalists are naturally alarmed, and they are doing their best to emphasise the radical points of difference. The



ANCIENT CHAPEL, TOXTETH.

alliance, it is pleaded, would be dangerous for that for which Congregationalism once stood, "An evangelical creed and an evangelistic life." The latter phrase brings clearly to the front one of the main points of difficulty. The religious atmosphere of the two churches is different, and even the most liberal in creed do not wish to sacrifice their loyalty to the "evangelistic life." We should be more than sorry to ask them to do anything of the kind. We have perhaps even more to learn than we have to give, and we shall be deeply grateful for any contact which will help us to care a great deal more than we have done in the past for "the evangelistic life," the preaching of the gospel, and the saving of souls.

The recent manifesto by the Tzar, granting larger liberties to his subjects and relieving the peasants from their burdensome liability to forced labour, is a document of great interest. It is regarded in many quarters as the most important measure of reform in Russian internal policy since the emancipation of the serfs. The granting of religious liberty is of special significance in view of the ruthless persecution of the dissenting sects in recent years. "We have irrevocably decided," so this royal proclamation runs, "to satisfy without delay, the needs for which the State has become ripe, and have deemed it expedient to strengthen the undeviating observance of the principles of tolerance laid down by the fundamental laws of the Russian Empire, which recognising the Orthodox Church as the ruling one, grant to all our subjects of other religions and to all foreign confessions freedom of creed and of worship according to their own rites." It will be interesting to observe how far the authorities of the Orthodox Church and the corrupt Russian bureaucracy will, in reality modify their policy in obedience to this recent spirit of freedom.

There are two bills before Parliament at the present time which should appeal powerfully to the Christian conscience of the community. We refer to the bill for regulating the employment of children, especially in relation to street trading, and the bill for shortening the hours of labour in shops. For both we bespeak the earnest attention, and, wherever possible, the active interest of our readers. Our instalments of social reform come very slowly, and these have been needed urgently for a long time in order to remove some of the more dangerous and oppressive conditions of city life. They are in the interest of those who are quite powerless to help themselves without legislative interference.

Fresh Air in Church.

Have you ever entered an empty church on a week-day when the caretaker was shaking the pew-cushions, sweeping the aisles, and raising a dust that reminded you of the abandoned sins and wickedness of the congregation left behind in the sanctuary?

The air is thick and dim. The pointed windows have a perfunctory look, like saints out of business. The organ is muffled and still, a dead atmosphere fills the place,—an atmosphere that belongs peculiarly to empty churches, some emanation perchance of the worshippers' respiration, faded odours and scents due to imperfect ventilation; for it seems to be a fact that the fresh breezes of heaven, the life-giving currents from sea and land, find more difficulties in entering churches than other buildings. Either the windows are too small, or the prejudice against opening them is too great. How seldom one enters a church and breathes air that is really fresh. The stagnant air is full of those special microbes that haunt places of worship to induce painful attacks of somnolence. It is said in excuse that the preacher is dull, whereas the dulness is sometimes in the heavier brain caused by want of ventilation. Which things are a parable. Fresh air in the church is a large subject. It has spiritual as well as material aspects. Something of the stagnant air of fifty or a hundred years lingers in the corners of many of our churches, in spite of liberalism and advanced science. There are prejudices and prepossessions, customs and traditions, that act upon the world like air breathed over again and again by numerous assemblies. They put the people to sleep on religious things, or they make the churches smell musty in the nostrils of men, who want the fresh air of heaven. There is a demand for fresh air, not so much, perhaps, in doctrines as in methods, in a hearty and vivid awakening to the needs of the people outside the church walls, the people who pass by on Sunday and feel that these services of ours have no interest for them, no living message, no invigorating breeze brought from the hills or the wide ocean. Old stagnant traditions of what a sermon should be, and how the service should be carried on, of church decorum, of the too-awful solemnities of tone and look proper for worship, of subjects discussed, linger about the place like bad air, and repel the living generation. "Up-to-date" is an odious phrase, yet it expresses an idea our churches would do well to take to heart. It means at least the desirability of fresh air—the sweeping out of old, dead convictions, of old, stagnant traditions, decayed proprieties, affected solemnities, and the letting in of the light and air of the living day.

Society of the Broader Faith.

OBJECT—

To unite together in fellowship all those of the broader faith who reside in places where there is no Unitarian Church.

METHODS OF WORK—

(1) The official organ of the Society and the *Seed Sower*.
(2) To arrange for meetings in such a way as may best suit local conditions in places where there are upwards of twelve members.

"Growing districts are ministered to by the Wesleyan, Congregational, and other denominations as soon as they begin to grow, whilst we stand by and do nothing but regret that our body does not grow as quickly as it should."—*The Christian Life*, Feb. 1st, 1902, p. 55.

There are many Christians, probably some in every church and congregation, who confess that they can only find room for their spiritual thought outside all the limitations of dogma; their simple religion is that which appeals to intelligent men of every race—the worship of God in spirit and in truth. To unite these together in fellowship wherever possible is the object of this society.

Our members have already done well by their correspondence with each other, and in some places have met together in common thought and kindred aspiration. But what has hitherto been lacking has now kindly been supplied by the Rev. Joseph Wood, in allowing *The Seed Sower* to be the official organ of the society. With the aid of a monthly magazine we hope to increase the number of our members and to promote the mutual interest and goodwill among those who, though living in the same town, have not yet been brought together in common recognition of each other.

Next month we hope to be able to give further particulars of progress.

Communications should be addressed—

MELSON GODFREY,
9, HOLLAR STREET,
CIRENCESTER, GLOS.

News from the Field.

There are more resignations and new settlements of ministers to announce than usual this month. Among the former are the retirements of *Rev. H. Rawlings*, from *York*, the *Rev. T. Paxton* from *South Shields*, the *Rev. J. Tyssul Davis* from *Cardiff*, and the *Rev. J. Birks* from *Derby*. *Mr. Rawlings* will soon be doing good work somewhere else, *Mr. Paxton* goes to *Oxford* for study, *Mr. Davis* will find some more congenial field, and *Mr. Birks* will enjoy a well-earned rest.

The *Rev. T. Robinson*, late of *Hale*, goes to give help at *Southport*, while *Mr. Wellbeloved* gathers up his strength again; the *Rev. S. H. Street, B.A.*, takes up the work at *Bell Street Mission, London*, where all his powers will be needed; the *Rev. J. E. Jenkins* is called to the fine field of labour at *Padiham*, and *Mr. J. Burton, M.A.*, for many years a teacher in Liverpool, is to begin a ministry in *Poole*. We offer good wishes to each of these labourers in the vineyard.

Strangeways Chapel, Manchester, where such streuuous work was done by the late *Rev. J. R. Beard, D.D.*, is to be sold, and the proceeds handed over to the *Manchester District Association*, with a view to the erection of a new place of worship in another part of *Manchester* or *Salford*. No doubt careful thought has been given to the matter, but it is hard to withhold a sigh of regret.

The *Old Meeting, Birmingham*, has devised a kindly and generous thing. The *Rev. Joseph Wood* has had a long strain of work, and experienced severe twinges of ill-health, and his people have asked him to rest and travel for six months, and they make it possible for him to do so in comfort. He leavesEngland in August. The change will, we trust, be beneficial to him, and his people will be rewarded by seeing him return with renewed strength to carry on the great work of his ministry. Suitable and efficient arrangements will be made for the supply of the pulpit.

Various organizations have been recording their doings and laying out plans for new work. The *Midland Christian Union* held its anniversary at the *Old Meeting, Birmingham*. A very useful record of work was presented, and a hopeful spirit pervaded the various meetings. Not for many years past were the meetings so large and invigorating. It was resolved to try to raise a sum of £5000 to aid in carrying on the enlarging work, and a strong committee was appointed with a view of bringing the scheme into operation. The preacher on the occasion was the *Rev. Stopford Brooke*, who, in his usually powerful way, greatly impressed the large congregation that crowded the handsome church.

The *East Cheshire Christian Union* held its anniversary in *Macclesfield*, and was full of energy and hopefulness.

The *Belfast Domestic Mission* has just celebrated its jubilee. It has done a good, quiet work, and has had a succession of useful missionaries and active workers. Its resources, of late years, have diminished, but we note with pleasure that there are signs of revived interest in its work, and that additions are to be made to its premises, so that its usefulness may be extended.

The *Liverpool Domestic Mission*, always doing great work, has had its means of growth enlarged by the generosity of its *President, Mr. Walter Holland*, who has built new rooms at a cost of £1500. *Mr. C. W. Jones* has also generously aided so as to make the new addition as complete as possible. Nowhere in England have we such capacious and splendid buildings for our Domestic Mission work.

It was pleasing to see the function at *Highgate, London*, where the stone was laid by *Lady Lawrence* of a new building, much required, to commemorate the earnest work and perpetuate the name of the late *Rev. Robert Spears*.

A phenomenal movement is at work in connection with the *British and Foreign Unitarian Association*. Some good friend has offered to subscribe £1000 a year, if an additional £2000 a year can be raised. A spirit of emulation has been created, and, already, in a few weeks, upwards of £1700 has been promised towards the £2000. This is a splendid testimony to the generosity and zeal of our laity, and shows their readiness to give and make sacrifices when there is good work to be done. A great responsibility will be laid upon the *Association* to employ these resources wisely and profitably.

The Mission in the *South of England*, undertaken by the *Rev. J. C. Street*, was carried through with great energy and success. The visits to the churches were full of interest, and the welcome given to the Missioner was of the most cordial nature.

Since last we went to press, the *Rev. Henry Solly*, in his 90th year, has gone to his rest and reward. He lived a strenuous life and did a great work. His book, "These Eighty Years," is almost a record of all progressive work done in England during the 19th century, and in all this he took an active part. His life was full of grace and sweetness, and his memory is precious to many.

We are all now looking forward to the meetings of the *National Conference*. It goes back this year to *Liverpool*, the place of its birth. The friends there are making arrangements to give it a gracious welcome, and great as is their generosity, their resources will be tried to the uttermost. From all parts of the kingdom our friends will gather for mutual counsel and help. Grave and searching questions will be debated, and suggestions of far-reaching importance will be made. May wisdom and good feeling abound.

SCRUTATOR.

March 15th, 1903.

Love and Truth.

If I be unregarded while I speak,
And few have little care for what I say,
And all the peoples follow down a way
That is not mine, and that I cannot seek,—

O Love, by whom thy world is still upborne,
From one supreme pollution keep me free:
Guard these vain lips from railing and from scorn,
Let me be blind to Truth ere false to thee.

—*Ambrose Bennett.*